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Dear Probe International Supporter:

Over the years our supporters have written countless letters to our elected and unelected officials and generously sent donations to help stop the Three Gorges dam. For that reason, you may have watched with despair last November as the Chinese government completed the diversion channel to redirect the Yangtze River around the dam's construction site. The ribbon cutting, the hype, the round-the-clock live coverage from the site, and the highly controlled PR blitz orchestrated by the Chinese government were designed to make the dam seem a fait accompli. Many of the press who contacted us believed it was so. They were surprised to learn that this is only the beginning and that we believe the dam will never be completed—certainly not in its current form.

Probe International has always argued that the dam builders would meet their real test when the first shovel hit the ground. Today, in the Yangtze River valley, the earth and the people are fighting back.

Technical troubles plague the project. An American engineering team that recently visited the site discovered that the temporary cofferdam, which is holding back the Yangtze while dam construction begins, is at great risk of collapsing. Boulders are falling off the diversion channel walls, and it now seems that project authorities overestimated the rock strength under the dam. The rock could fracture, causing water to seep beneath and around the dam wall, threatening its foundation, and triggering landslides. China has called in a team of Norwegian geotechnical engineers to rescue the project, but remediation may take decades. Meanwhile, rock failures may damage ship traffic and the locks themselves. Sediment buildup, which Probe International and other critics warned about, is forcing project authorities to dredge the diversion channel around the clock. The American engineers warn that "sedimentation is likely to compromise the operation of the dam much sooner and more decisively than advertised."

Rampant corruption and government trickery also undermine the project. A Chinese sociologist, who recently interviewed farmers, workers, small-business owners, and local officials, reveals that resettlement officials are pocketing resettlement funds, resigning, and then disappearing. In other cases, they are using resettlement funds to build comfortable government offices and housing or to build model resettlement sites, which are then "showcased by local officials as

success stories both to persuade other farmers to relocate and to impress senior inspectors.” Most of the 50,000 people already resettled are languishing. Farmers say their new land looks “like ditches from a distance and like pigsties close up.” Many have returned to their original homes, penniless. Those who try to defend themselves are silenced. Last fall, when Premier Li Peng visited a township slated for resettlement, officials barred those angry about their compensation from presenting a petition at the meeting while bringing in others to pose as resettlers.

The prospect of forcing nearly 2 million people to move from their homes makes local officials dread the future. By the year 2003, the government plans to flood the valley to the dam’s 135-metre mark. As one local official predicted, “By then, some 500,000 people will need to be relocated immediately. But there won’t be enough money to relocate all these people. There won’t be enough jobs for the relocated factory workers. And there won’t be enough land for the relocated farmers.” He went on ominously, “If the central government insists on filling up the reservoir, it will have to rely on the military or a man-made flood to force people out of their homes.”

The Three Gorges dam is sowing the seeds of its own destruction. To accelerate its cancellation, to minimize the harm done (the government is under increasing pressure to scale back the dam), and to stop future disasters like Three Gorges, Probe International is teaming up with researchers, academics, sympathetic officials, and the press in China to disseminate crucial information. Starting in June, we will be publishing *Three Gorges Probe* in both Chinese and English over the Internet, reaching hundreds of thousands of readers inside and outside China. The Chinese government can no longer extinguish a debate about the dam among its citizens, even though inside China the press must publish only “positive propaganda” to “guide public opinion.”

With this information, we will also challenge the fiction that Canada’s Export Development Corporation and other foreign financiers maintain to justify their loans, and we will expose corporate welfare schemes for multinationals like Canadian General Electric.

The fight to stop the Three Gorges dam is far from over. If you can, please act now, with a generous tax-deductible donation to help us slow and ultimately stop this manmade disaster.

Yours sincerely,



Patricia Adams
Executive Director